

EXHIBIT 7
DATE 2-19-09
HB 499

House Bill 499
February 19, 2009
Presented by Ken McDonald
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks supports House Bill 499, which revises laws related to the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program. The upland game bird program is funded with earmarked portions of upland game bird hunting licenses. This program has recently undergone a performance review by the Legislative Auditor's office and, as we understand it, many of the recommendations that are being formulated from the audit are addressed with this legislation. One key recommendation is to develop a strategic plan with goals and objectives for the Upland Game Bird Program, with input from a Citizen's Advisory Council. FWP agrees such a plan would help provide clear direction for the program and reduce some of the controversy surrounding use of these funds.

As written, the bill would establish a standing 12-member council for advising the department on developing a strategic plan for the Upland Game Bird Program, and for monitoring ongoing program activities. A standing council with 12 members entails considerable financial costs, estimated to be \$5,400 for a 2-day meeting, and requires staff time for coordination, scheduling, and follow-up with individual council members. FWP would benefit from the expertise and diversity of experiences that come from a large advisory council during the planning process. We have discussed the idea of a smaller council with the sponsor once the strategic plan is completed. We have agreed to work with Representative French on an amendment to HB 499 reducing the size of the Advisory Council once the strategic plan is completed.

FWP supports House Bill 499 and ask the committee to pass this bill.